

Excerpts
Planning Commission Minutes
August 8, 2001

Application No. UP-580-01, Williamsburg Players: Request for a major amendment to a Special Use Permit, pursuant to Section 24.1-115(d)(3) of the York County Zoning Ordinance, to authorize the expansion of the James-York Playhouse. The proposed expansion involves a 9,000-square foot building addition and 62 additional parking spaces. The playhouse was originally approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1977 through the approval of Special Use Permit Application No. 77-UP14 and is located at 200 Hubbard Lane approximately 760 feet north of the intersection of Hubbard Lane (Route 716) and Penniman Road (Route 641).

Mr. Tim Cross presented a brief video introduction. He summarized the staff memorandum dated July 20, 2001, and indicated that the proposed number of parking spaces has been increased to 119 since it was written. He said expansion of the Playhouse would provide a type of cultural amenity that the County encourages, and he recommended approval of the application by the adoption of Resolution PC01-25.

Mr. Heavner asked if the proposed expansion would be allowed by right if the property in question was zoned GB, and Mr. Cross said that it would be.

Mr. Simasek expressed concern about traffic safety because Hubbard Lane has no sidewalks and would probably no longer be considered a residential street if the traffic were to increase significantly. He asked how the safe number of trips was determined. Mr. Cross said the traffic study focuses more on congestion than safety but that safety is a component of the Intersection Capacity Analysis. He added, however, that the portion of Hubbard Lane in question is very wide and only a few traffic accidents have ever been recorded there. He believed the road shoulders provide adequate space to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. Mr. Simasek mentioned on-street parking on Hubbard Lane, and Mr. Cross said that on-street parking in front of the James-York Playhouse does not occur and would not be permitted.

Mr. Simasek asked how many seats the theater would hold, and Mr. Cross indicated the total after the expansion would be 250 seats, doubling the current seating capacity. Mr. Simasek inquired about the Playhouse's plans for any civic, cultural, or religious activities, and Mr. Cross suggested the applicant should address its plans for the future.

The Chair opened the public hearing

Mr. Rick Hinson, 152 John Rolfe Lane, Board Chair and President, Williamsburg Players, Inc., introduced Donna Fox and Al Schuman, members of the Board of Directors. He said the theater has been active in the County since 1957, having moved into its permanent facility in the 1970s. He said the rising population of patrons and general admissions has driven the need to expand the 4,000-

square-foot facility. Further, Mr. Hinson mentioned the practice of placing local artists' works on the lobby walls, which practice could be expanded, and the scholarship program the Playhouse underwrites for theater majors, which will continue. He said there have been discussions in the past about sharing the space with another nonprofit group and the expansion should allow the applicant to accommodate the group.

Mr. Hinson addressed Mr. Simasek's concerns about traffic and safety. He said the Playhouse has always been sensitive to the neighborhood and would not want to inconvenience its neighbors, and the primary reason to request additional parking is to "get off the street." Mr. Hinson did not think the proposed expansion would impact traffic in any major way.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Mr. Simasek asked if the total number of parking spaces meets the conditions of the original use permit (one space per three seats). Mr. Cross replied that they do and that the Playhouse is actually proposing to add more spaces than the County requires. Mr. Carter added for a theater that the Zoning Ordinance requires one space for every four seats.

Mr. Simasek moved the adoption of Resolution PC01-25 recommending approval. It was adopted by unanimous vote (5:0, Mr. Hendricks and Ms. White absent).
